critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus

Sept 19, 1956. Vol VIII No 28 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter $25 year. $6. 50quarter

This Week

Take A Giant Step-Jan Hus -351 E 74 . 9/25. New Theatre Revival of Louis Peterson play with Bill Gunn, directed by Ira Cirker.

Judy Garland Show-Palace 9/26.

Absalom- Carl Fischer Hall-165 W 57 9/27. Nash & Goldstein revival of Lionel Abel play, staged by Herbert Machiz.

Next Week

Arms & Man-Downtown 10/1... Autobiography-Booth 10/2... Lesson-Tempo 10/2... Lower Depths-Contemporary 10/2... Loud Red Patrick-Ambassador 10/3... Harbor Lights-Playhouse 10/4... Six Fingers on 5 Finger Glove -Longacre 10/8

25th Year

NY Public Library Theatre Collection will celebrate its 25th anniversary Sept 27. "Highlights of Theatre" exhibit will be on display in main lobby. George Freedley is founder and curator.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Saint Joan- Phoenix 9/11. 2 con votes, 5 pro votes. This is score on first play of season, the Cambridge Festival production of Shaw's drama starring Siobhan McKenna. McClain, Journal American, and Donnelley, filing his first notice for World Telegram & Sun, vetoed the proceedings. Former panned play as too wordy, latter panned star for lacking an exalted quality necessary. 3 critics had nothing but raves for the Irish star. Coleman, Mirror, Chapman, News, and Watts, Post, thought McKenna portrayal with peasant brogue exciting and just about perfect. They also had words of praise for other members of the company, including Michael Wager, Kent Smith and Ian Keith. Atkinson, Times, also filed a pro notice, but had reservations about the star's performance. There is still a lot of Shaw and a saint that are neither felt nor communicated in her performance, Times man noted. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, approved it soley on her performance, fearing that the rest of the large cast resorts too much of the time to "historical type acting."

Pictures in the Hallway- Playhouse 9/ 16. O'Casey autobiography staged recently at YMHA for 2 performances is being presented Sunday matinee and evenings through Oct 7. 5 critics found the reading with Aline MacMahon, Staats Cotsworth very effective. A theatre interlude of pure delight, something to cherish, raved Atkinson, Times. It has a remarkable knack of catching you up in quick, vivid strokes, summed up Kerr, Herald Tribune. Beautiful and bouyant, added Chapman, News. A sensibly designed, affecting dramatized reading, reported Donnelly, World Telegram & Sun. McClain, Journal American also found it a pleasant exercise.

Confessions of Critic

Though he don't pretend to be a great student of theatre, McClain, Journal American, does claim to be a reasonably literate and reliable reporter. He considers it his duty to tell the people if the ticket is worth the price. If it is sufficiently funny or moving and within the realm of good taste, he thinks it should be recommended on a basis of entertaiment value.

Waiting for Godot will be presented again on Broadway by Michael Myerberg. An all-Negro cast will be featured in the Beckett play set to open Nov 11. Fred O'Neal will play Pozzo and Manton Moreland will play Gogo.

Plays

Irene Hawthorne will present her one-woman show Autobiography at Booth for one week starting Oct 2... Juno and the Paycock musical version to be adapted by Will Glickman and Joseph Stein... Long Day's Journey Into Night will give 6 evening performances weekly starting at 7 30 PM... Small War on Murray Hill will open Jan 2 with Jan Sterling and Leo Genn featured in Robert E. Sherwood play ... Rosita Diaz, Spanish ac tress, will portray Sakini in Teahouse of August Moon to be presented Nov 7 at City Center.

Players

Jane Kean replaced Jayne Mansfield, Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter... Julie Andrews returned to My Fair Lady after missing 13 performances due to infected throat, Lola Fisher subbed... Sydney Chaplin signed as male lead of Bells Are Ringing... Leila Martin added to Best House in Naples ... Tom Ewell to star in The Tunnel of Love.

Playhouses

Globe Theatre, which had been scheduled to return to legit fold, re-opened as a movie house after Zeckendorf-Stevens deal fell through.

Other Broadways

US plays presented in German at Berlin FestivalSept 16 include-View From Bridge, Rainmaker, Diary of Anne Frank and Kiss Me Kate.

Summer Playhouses

Stalag 17 concludes season at Oakdale Musical Theatre, Conn... Christopher Plummer will portray Hamlet next summer at Stratford, Ontario, Shakespearean Festival

Legal Dept.

Local 802, American Federation of Musicians has ruled that members are barred from investing in shows employing them in any musical capacity.

Theatre TV Notes

The Letter will be presented on NBC TV Producers Showcase Oct 15 starring Siobhan McKenna... Middle of the Night scenes will be presented on Sept 23 CBS-TV Ed Sullivan... Bing Crosby will film a special tribute to Cole Porter for CBS-TV Oct 6 "You're the Top" Porter festival.

Vaudeville

Judy Garland All Star Variety Show opening Sept 26 at Palace includes Amin Brothers, Nora Kovacdh and Istvan Rabovsky, Alan King, Pomoff, Thedy and Family, and Bob Williams.

Theatre Out of Town

San Francisco playing host to Damn Yankees with BobbyClark and The Lark with Julie Harris... Boston tryout season opens Sept 17 with Harbor Lights and Sixth Finger in a Five Finger Glove... Loud Red Patrick opens Sept 17 in Philadelphia.

OFF BROADWAY

5 special Tuesday afternoon performances will be given at Theatre de Lys to aid Greater NY Chapter of ANTA. Helen Hayes will appear in Lovers, Villains and Fools Oct 25, a Shakespearean variety show directed by Jack Mnning. Also a reading of Percy Mackaye Hamlet, Prince of Denmark by Blanche Yurka is scheduled for the series.

Sheppard Strudwick, Ludwig Donath and William Smithers join Betty Field in The Sea Gull due Oct 22 at 4th St... Arms and the Man switched opening to Oct 1 at Downtown... The Lesson now scheduled to open Oct 2 at Tempo.

William Whitman and Sally Kemp will be featured in a revival of I Am a Camera due Oct 9 at Actors Playhouse. Whitman, Arthur Conescu and playwright Phillip Pruneau are the producers, and the author will direct.

Shoestring '57 revue produced by Ben Bagley will open Nov 5 at Barbizon Plaza... Edna Thomas out of Take A Giant Step due to illness, Beah Richards replaced her... The Lower Depths has changed opening date to Oct 2 at Contemporary... Me, Candido to open Oct 15 at Greenwich Mews.

The Affairs of Anatol presented at Directors Workshop was recommended by Kerner, Womens Wear, not for the direction but for some of the performances.

THEATRE BOOK COMMENTS

"Jean Cocteau" by Margaret Crosland(Knopf) was recommended by Down, Variety as a graceful, somewhat partisan biography with good bibliography and excellent illustrations.

"The Man Who Lived Twice" by Eric W. Barnes(Scribner), a biograph y of playwright Edward Sheldon was cheered by Variety mugg as one of the most important of current stage reflections.

TV THEATRE COMMENTS

Antigone presented in modern dress on NBC Kaiser Hour drew split notices from TV reviewers. Crosby, Herald Tribune, thought it one of the best of the TV theatre adaptions in both play and production. Gould, Times, enjoyed portrayal of Claude Rains but thought play disappointing. Van Horne, World-Telegram & Sun, feared TV adaption was like a soap-opera.

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CRITICAL DIGEST, 139 E 47, EL 5-6894

GREEN

ROOM

DEPARTMENT

LOST WORDS... The play is the thing, to be sure, but the audience would very much like to hear as well as see it, complains Lydia Perera in Times article. Lack of projection often due to TV and film training of cast and to fact that cast rehearsed in empty theatre. A solution was suggested by having the director come back often checking that the play can be heard in all sections of the theatre.

COLUMN TIPS... Diary of Anne Frank up for Nobel Peace Prize hears Winchell... Judy Holliday wants unknown Jerry Lazarre to be lead in her Bells Are Ringing, reports Kilgallen... New legit theatre may be put in office building going up on Leon & Eddie's site on West 52nd notes Walker.

ADD US-BRITISH... Helen Hayes was simply wrong in her low estimates of the English theatre, Yul Brynner told Hift, Variety. It is in the midst of finding a new form and any comparison to US stage is unrealistic and unfair. US can't approach the theatre as an art form as the English do, actor concludes.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Out of town run process was approved by Kerr, Herald Tribune, when what is cut is the part that bores audience, and what is added, he hopes, is inspiration... Sudden cheering re-emergence of O'Neill, Shaw and O'Casey appears to be directly related to a renewed critical appraisal of the trio, points out Watts, Post... McClain, Journal American, would welcome advice on how to find a cab near the theatre on a rainy night.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Chief quarrel with Lee Strasberg's ideas is with his failure to divorce himself and his studio from the legion of pretentious, largely untalented young actors and directors do both him and the theatre in general irreparable harm, states a Times reader... Critics were urged by a C. D. subscriber not to spend too much of their white space telling how honest, unprejudiced and faithful they are.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Late opening of season due to lack of good try-out houses, Richard Krakeur, Loud Red Patrick producer, told Coleman, Mirror. Stamford, Long Branch, Asbury Park and Atlantic City were used for such purposes in the past... New scripts can only make it to Broadway if they are not too controversial, have small casts and one set, Ira Cirker, producer of Take A Giant Step told Herridge, Post. This is the reason his group at Jan Hus House will try to present good new plays by unknowns that cannot be produced on Broadway. .Group has already received more than 60 scripts during the summer and have found at least four of them exciting. They have 40 week option on East side theatre and will present not only new plays, but good plays that they feel did not have a fair chance on Broadway. First play, Take A Giant Step, is an example of this.

" PROS & CONS BY T.M K."

Saint Joan presents a group of interesting portrayals of historical characters in the rather longish Shaw drama.

Siobhan McKenna's Irish accented lass is a well thought out and well presented version of one of the theatre's favorite subjects. Not knowing Joan personally, who is to say if her thoughts on the subject are right or wrong.

Michael Wager, Ian Keith and Thayer David also present interesting acting chores. If the net result is not as stimulating as anticipated the fault may lie with the seemingly lack of unity and direction among the rest of the large cast.

Also until the musical version of Joan arrives, as it must someday, producers and actresses should call a moratorium on plays about the French saint.

* * *

Incredible as it seems one fourth of the season's plays will be presented in the month of October. Fund raising, cast availabilities, house availabilities are a few of the reasons why producers fight for October NY bookings.

The wear and tear on theatre buffs who try to see every NYshow should not be considered. Neither should the fact that these theatre buffs have a limited supply of cash for their hobby. But producers who gripe about critics should remember that critics are human too. After seeing 3 or 4 stinkers in a row, they may tend to think all shows are stinkers. Wider spacing of openings throughout theyear would be healthy for all concerned.

* * *

NY theatres are being turned into parking lots faster than any one cares to build new ones. New theatres in office and/or apartment buildings have been rumored since the NY City Council amended the building code to allow for such enterprises. Though many false-starts have been rumored, no one has built a new legit theatre as yet.

The Lincoln Square project is slated to have one civic legit theatre and 5 or 6 private legit theatres in the same West Side area.

Theatre fans can support the Lincoln Square project by informing public officials that they are interested in the civic project, and be informing private legit producers that they are anxious to attend new, comfortable theatres.

* * *

The US-British trans-atlantic verbal dispute seems to have quieted down just in time for NY to welcome a batch of English plays and players. It is evident in recent years that both London and Broadway relies on each other for a good share of its annual production. Trying to halt this exchange of plays, players and productions is about as dangerous as closing a famous canal.

* * *

Actors must project to have themselves heard in the theatre. One can only wonder why they cannot learn to project a little bit more, thus allowing the air conditioning systems to be used for more than five minutes of each scene. It is currently the practice to turn the noisy air-cooling systems off, usually at the request of the cast.

London Theatre

Plays

The Crystal Heart a new musical to be presented in London by Lyn Austin and Tom Noyes prior to Broadway production will feature Gladys Cooper and Dilys Lay. London debut slated for March... Once There Was A Russian by Sam and Bella Spewack will open in London at Christmas time with Alfred Drake featured. Herman Levin will produce it in NY next season... Harmony Close a new musical will be presented this fall by Stephen Mitchill with Dennis Louis, Carol Raye. John Fernald directs... The Doctor's Dilemma will be presented Oct 4 at Phoenix with Ann Todd.

Players

Edith Evans returned to The Chalk Garden after month's illness. Gladys Cooper, who subbed, flew to Los Angeles for production of play with Judith Anderson... Daphne Newton replaced Joyce Carey, South Sea Bubble... Danny Purchess replaced Tony Newley, Cranks... June Havoc appeared in Theatre on BBC TV.

Comments

Helen Hayes was asked to think again about thewithering words aimed at British theatre by "Stage." While trade journal defends actors and productions for their high standards, it does admit Miss Hayes has a point on the fact that outspoken writers are being throttled by the English censor system.

Digests of London Reviews

Cymbeline at Old Vic was panned by Darlington, Tribune, as a poor production. Major blame placed on director Michael Benthall who seemed uncertain whether to try to hide the plays absurdities or to underline them. Barbara Jefford in the lead lacked gaiety.

A River Breeze at Phoenix by and with Roland Culver was labeled as the worst London has to offer by Tynan, Observer. French windowed, dead ended farce. Critic urged theatre-goers to blockade it by sending troops in force to the Berliner Ensemble presenting Brecht plays instead.

Towards Zero, new Agatha Christie mystery, was vetoed by Myro, Variety, as not up to standard Broadway quality. Play does not have slightest degree of realism in the proceedings and would probably only make so-so film material.

Hold the Line, Soviet farce presented at Unity, was mildly panned by EMA, Whats ON, as an interesting, though rather exasperating bedroom farce minus the more obvious situations.

Mother Courage presented by Berliner Ensemble at Palace was cheered by Stage as something not to be missed. Nothing like it in scope, style and originality has been seen before in London. Entire German company gives impeccable performance.

" OFF BROADWAY "

ICEMAN COMETH Circle $3.60	5 Sher Sq OR 5-9437	6 Pro- Times, Trib, Mir, J. Am, Post, WT & S
MAN DESTINY Donwtown $3.60	85 E 4 GR 3-4412	2 Pro-Times, Post 2 Con- Variety, Women Wear
NOBODY CHILD Open Stage	15-2nd Av TR 4-4735	3 Con- Times, Variety, Women Wear
NO EXIT T. East	211 E 60 TE 2-9220	5 Pro-Times, Trib, Post, Variety, Women Wear
PIC DOR GRAY Bleecker St	145 Blkr WA 9-8730	1 Pro- Times
SAINT JOAN Phoenix $3.85	12th & 2nd AL 4-0525	5 Pros - Times, Trib, News, Mirror, Post 2 Cons- J. American, World-Tel-Sun
3 PENNY OPERA De Lys $4.85	121 Chris. WA 4-8782	3 Pros- Times, Trib, Post
UNCLE VANYA 4th St	83 E 4 OR 4-5710	7 NYC daily -okayed

"TV THEATRE PROGRAMS "

10/6- CBS Your The Top- Cole Porter Festival-Shirely Jones, Gordon McCrae, etc
10/28- NBC- Born Yesterday- with Mary Martin on Evans Shows.
11/24. NBC- High Button Shoes- With Nanette Fabray
11/25- NBC- Man and Superman- Maurice Evans on Evans Show.
3/57- NBC-- Romeo and Juliet- with Old Vic
4/57- NBC- Great Sebastians- with the Lunts.

" THEATRE CALENDER "

Camille- Cherry Lane 9/18
Take Giant Step-Jan Hus 9/25
Judy Garland Show-Palace 9/26
Absalom-Fischer Hall9/29

Arms & Man- Downtown 10/1
Autobiography-Booth 10/2
Lower Depths-Contemporary 10/2
Loud Red Patrick-Ambassador 10/3
Harbor Lights- Playhouse 10/4

6 Fingers in 5 Finger Glov-Long 10/8
Lesson- Tempo 10/8
I Am a Camera-Actors 10/9
Reluctant Debutante-Miller 10/10
Daisy Miller- 10/10
Too Late Phalarope-Belasco 10/11

Thor With Angels-Bway Chapel 10/14
Me , Candido, Greenwich Mews 10/15
Moon Misbegotton (?)- Bijou 10/15
Double in Hearts- Golden 10/16
Hamlet- Shakespearewrights 10/17
Apple Cart- Plymouth 10/18

Lil Abner- St James 10/22
Sea-Gull- 4th St- 10/22
Richard II- Winter Garden 10/23
Johnny Johnson-Carn. Theatre 10/23
Separate Tables- Music Box 10/25

Happist Millionaire -Barrymore 10/29
Diary of Scoundrel-Phoenix 10/30
Major Barbara- Beck 10/30
Auntie Mame-Broadhurst 10/31

Sleeping Price-Coronet 11/1
Long Days Journey- Hayes 11/7
Teahouse August Moon-C. Center 11/7
Best H use in Naples- 11/8
Waiting for Godot- 11/11

Shoestring '57 - Carnegie Playhouse 11/?
Protective Custody- 11/?
Child of Fortune- Royale 11/13
Very Special Baby- 11/14
Girls of Summer- Longacre 11/19
Night of Auk- 11/19
Candide- Beck 11/22
Build with One Hand- 11/28
Bells Are Ringing- Shubert 11/29
Happy Hunting- Majestic 12/6

Everybody Loves Me- 12/10
Good Woman of Setzuan- Phoenix 12/11

Small War on Murray Hill- 1/2/57
Visit to a Small Planet- Booth 1/9/57
Waltz of Toreadors- 1/17/57
Duchess Malfi- Phoenix 1/22/57
Quare FElIow- 1/L.??57

Best of Steinbeck- Playhouse 2/1/57
13 Daughters- W. Garden 2/18/57
Measure for Measure- Phoenix 2/19/57
Hole in Head- 2/27

Taming of Shrew- Phoenix 3/19/57
Tom Sawyer- Phoenix 4/18/57
First Gentlemen- 4/?/57

"C.D. VIEWS CURRENT SHOWS "

PROS	Damn Yankee, Diary Anne Frank, Inherit Wind No Exit, Iceman Cometh, Uncle Vanya
CONS	Fanny, Middle Night, Will Success

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Sept 19, 1956 PLAYGOERS GUIDE chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, 139 E 47, NYC--EL 5-6894

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This weekly chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, the weekly NYC theatre newsletter, presents up-to minute data on current business and critical reception of all current Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Subscribers to CRITICAL DIGEST may write or phone for any other specific data or for late reviews.

"C"-Critics-figures refer to percentage of PRO notices filed by NYC daily drama critics. PRO means show was recommended as entertaining and/or stimulating, not if critic predicted if show would be a hit.

"B"- Business-figures refer to percentage and grosss ticket sales of last week and preceding weeks. "%" figures refer to last week's attendance. "CAP"-figures refer to capacity of house. Figures that follow are gross estimates of Variety for lastweek and preceding weeks. All figures are in thousands of dollars. Thus--"Cap $41--$14 $16" means that capacity of house is $41,000, last weeks gross sales $14, preceding week $16,000, etc.

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CAT HOT TIN ROOF Morosco $6.90	217 W 45 CI 6-6230	90% C Chapman, News, sole con vote 60% B- Cap $31--$21 $21 $23 $20 $20 $19 $19 $21
DAMN YANKEE 46th St- $8.05	226 W 46 CI 6-4271	100% C- Unanimous approval musical & cast 95% B- Cap $50--$44 $48 $47 $45 $47 $42 $43
DIARY A. FRANK Cort $5.75	138 W 48 CI 5-4289	100% C- Unanimous approval Pulitizer Prizer 95% B- Cap $28--$23 $20 $22 $20 $20 $21 $22
FANNY Majestic $7.50	245 W 44 CI 6-0730	50% C- Con votes by Trib, Mir, Post. J. Am 55% B- Cap $62--$33 $30 $29 $25 $26 $27 $28
HATFUL RAIN Plymouth $5.75	230 W 45 CI 6-9156	70% C- 3 Con votes-Mir, Post, J. Am 50% B- Cap $23--$13 $14 $15 $11 $9 $8 $10 $10 $14
INHERIT WIND National $5.75	208 W 41 PE 6-8226	90% C- Funke, Times, sole von vote filed RE OPEND SEPT 15
MATCHMAKER Royale $5.75	250 W 45 CI 5-5760	90% C- Watts, Post, filed sole con vote 55% B- Cap $31--$18 $14 $17 $12 $12 $14 $13 $13
MIDDLE NIGHT ANTA $5.75	250 W 52 CI 6-8870	20% C-2 Pro Play-Mir, J. Am. -100% for Robinson 50% B- Cap $40--$20 $23-Reopened Aug 27
MR WONDERFUL Broadway $7.50	1681 Bway CI 7-2887	10% C-Chapman, News, sole pro play-100% Davis 70% B- Cap $71--$43 $48 $50 $46 $45 $41 $42 $45
MOST HAPPYFELLA Imperial $7.50	246 W 45 CO 5-2412	100% C- Unanimous raves for musical & cast 100% B- Cap $58--$58 $58 $58 $58 $58 $58 $58
MY FAIR LADY Hellinger $7.50	1655 Bway PL 7-7064	100% C- Raves for musical of GBS classic 100% B--Cap $64--$64 $64 $64 $64 $64 $64 $64
NO TIME SGTS Alvin $5.75	250 W 52 CI 5-5226	100% C- Unanimous praise for soldier comedy 100% B- Cap $38--$38$38 $38 $38 $38 $38 $38 $38
NEW FACES Barrymore $7.50	247 W 47 CI 6-0390	40% C-3 Pros-News, Mirror, Journal American 60% C- Cap $38--$22 $27 $24 $20 $22 $22 $23 $27
PAJAMA GAME St James $6.90	240 W 44 LA 4-4664	100% C- Unanimous praise for musical & Cast 45% B- Cap $52--$29--$32 $33 $27 $27 $30
WILL SUCCESS Shubert $5.75	245 W 44 CI 6-5090	20% C- 2 Pros-J. Am, News 40% B- Cap $41--$14 $14 $16 $14 $14 $14 $12 $15

" RATINGS OF NYC CRITICS "

1955-56 season ratings of NYC drama critics on current Broadway shows by Critical Digest. "%" figures are percentages of pro votes in comparison to con votes of current shows. Variety figures are percentages of favorable reviews written for an entire season.

	C. D. %%	PROS	CONS	Variety'55-56	54-55
Atkinson, Times	60%	10	6	.490	.607
Kerr, Herald Tribune	55%	9	7	.394	.354
Chapman, News	80%	13	3	.527	.580
Coleman, Mirror	65%	11	5	.454	.566
Watts, Post	50%	8	8	.541	.426
McClain, Jour. Am	80%	12	4	.535	.532
Hawkins, WT & S	65%	11	5	.396	.548

" LONDON OPENINGS "

Sept 5- River Breeze- Phoenix
Sept 11- Cynbeline- Old Vic
Sept 19- Childrens Hour- Arts
Sept 20- Under Milkwood- New
Oct 4- Doctors Dilemma-Sayville
Oct 23- Much Ado About Nothing- Old Vic
Nov 15- Fanny- Drury Lane
Dec 10- Country Wife- Royal Court